



HARDSHIPS IN FOREIGN MISSION WORK.

BY REV. R. P. MACKAY.

Difficulties are not peculiar to work and life in foreign missions, although the foreign missionary has greater difficulties to contend with than any other. Christ said to His disciples, "In this world ye shall have tribulation," and it has always proved true. Difficulties vary in kind and degree, but in some form they come. He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life saveth it. The seed must fall into the ground and die that it may bring forth fruit. It is wholesome for us who live in milder times to recall the struggles and sufferings of the pioneers of civil and religious light and liberty in the past in every land.

IRISH AND SCOTCH MISSIONARIES.

The Irish and Scotch missionaries who evangelized the continent of Europe "went out into the forest wilderness, mid wild robber hordes, swarming with wild beasts, unhealthy and fever-breeding, with their own hands reared for themselves huts, cleared and cultivated the soil, and when the harvest failed, and fish in the brooks failed, they lived on bark and weeds and the small fruit that grew in the forest." Yet they never turned back nor did their faith fail.

COUNCIL OF NICE.

At the Council of Nice there were 318 bishops present, and all except eleven had the marks of violence upon their bodies, endured in the service of the Gospel. "In two of these bishops the socket of the right eye is vacant, and on the socket is the stamp of a red-hot iron scar; some limp in one leg; the hands of some are paralyzed, for all the fingers have been scorched; the form of one, called the Shepherd is hideous through mutilations; there are disfigurements of various kinds on those who discuss the Homousios." That was not a hospital into which the maimed were gathered, but a church council, in which the leaders of Christian thought were assembled,

and yet so large a percentage as 307 out of 318 bore evidence of torture.

ADONIRAM JUDSON IN BURMA.

Witness Judson in the Burman prison ! “ A prison that had never been washed since it was built, the floors and walls saturated with fetid odours and putrid remains of cast-away animal and vegetable stuff, the stale fumes of thousands of tobacco pipes, the exudations from the bodies of a crowd of never-washed convicts, encouraged by the thermometer at 100 deg., in a den almost without ventilation. When night came on the jailer passed a bamboo pole between the fettered legs of each individual, and when it had threaded the required number, it was hoisted to a height which allowed their shoulders to rest on the ground whilst their feet rested on the iron rings of the fetters. The adjustment of the height was such as not to endanger life, and not low enough to exempt from pain. In the morning the bamboo was lowered to within one foot of the floor, when the blood began to circulate in the benumbed limbs.” Imagine a man of fine sensibilities in such conditions, and in addition the thought of his beloved wife threading alone the hot, crowded streets, hourly exposed to the insults of rude Burman officials, day by day bringing or sending food to the jail; assuaging the wretchedness of the prisoners by bribing their keepers; pleading for the release of her husband with one Burman officer after another, and with such pathetic eloquence that on one occasion she melted to tears even the old governor of the prison; giving birth to her babe during this awful crisis; carrying her little Maria in her arms for miles to the prison, her only conveyance a rough cart, the violent motion of which together with the dreadful heat and dust made her almost distracted, and at last breaking down, and brought to death's door by small-pox.

LIVINGSTONE IN AFRICA.

Read Blaikie's pathetic description of Livingstone in the heart of Africa. “ Years had passed since he had heard from home. The sound of his mother tongue came to him only in the broken sentences of Chuma or Susi or other attendants, or in the echoes of his own voice as he poured it out in prayer or in some cry of home-sickness that could not be kept in. In long pain and sickness there had been neither wife nor child nor brother to cheer him with sympathy or lighten his dull hut with a smile. He had been baffled and tantalized beyond description in his efforts to complete the little bit of exploration which was yet necessary to complete his task. His soul was vexed for the frightful exhibitions of wickedness around him, when man to man, instead of brothers, were worse than wolves and tigers

to each other. During all his past life he had been sowing his seed weeping, but so far was he from bringing back his sheaves rejoicing that the longer he lived the more cause there seemed for his tears. He had not yet seen of the travail of his soul. In opening Africa he had seemed to open it for brutal slave-traders. He was offered himself a free-will offering and living sacrifice. What could have sustained and kept him firm to his purpose in such a wilderness of desolation? He wrote in his diary, "I read the whole Bible through four times whilst I was in Manyuema."

These are but specimens that might be multiplied indefinitely. It was not simply the short, sharp pang of the fatal stroke, but a whole life-time of struggle—to the human eye fruitless struggle—in obedience to a Divine command.

These are, we repeat, but specimens of the long list who in all ages and climes counted not their lives too great a sacrifice for the cause and Master whom they served.

Do missionaries still suffer in that way? Occasionally they do—but only occasionally, thanks to the protecting arm of civilized powers. But the conditions are always present. Threats are frequent, the heathen rage, and would if they dared execute their threats.

ORDINARY HARDSHIPS.

The following are some of the ordinary difficulties of the missionary:—

1. The missionary must become acquainted with the prejudices, errors, idiosyncracies, etc., of the people amongst whom he labours, in order to be able to treat them intelligently, and that is a work of years. Experienced missionaries say that a man does very well if, during the first year in China, he avoids doing harm to the cause which he wishes to promote.

2. The difficulty of getting such command of a foreign language as to express one's thoughts with facility and effect. Most speakers in their native tongue know the distress of being unable to clothe their thoughts. How much worse must it be, at least for some years, in a foreign tongue! The idioms of the Chinese language are so difficult that old missionaries who undertake literary work continue to employ a Chinese teacher.

3. The language of any country is the expression of current thought. Where Christian thought does not exist, the language does not contain words to express it. Hence the difficulty of making the natives understand what is said, even after the resources of the language have been exhausted. Many amusing, and, to the missionary,

disappointing incidents, are related as to the misunderstandings of hearers.

4. The climate in tropical countries is so depressing that it is literally true that many missionaries are never in a normal state of health. Long periods of intense heat, followed by still more enervating wet seasons, make frequent furloughs absolutely necessary. In Africa such changes must be taken every three years, in order to save life.

5. The unsanitary conditions are such as to cause surprise that our missionaries escape as they do. The importance of drainage or pure water is not known, and cholera, typhoid fever, small-pox, etc., are ever present.

6. The hostility of the natives, especially in the newer missions, is depressing. The knowledge that false reports are circulated, character defamed, motives impugned, that they are universally hated and distrusted, is more than inconvenient—a sharp encounter can be endured by many whose nerves will not stand a daily monotonous ache at the heart.

7. The missionary is a constant witness of suffering. In India, China or Africa the extreme poverty of the people results annually in the death of millions by starvation. Manifold diseases, aggravated by the barbarous and senseless treatment of native doctors; cruel customs, such as caste, foot-binding, and the torture of widows; oppressive laws, savage disregard as to each others welfare, unspeakable uncleanness in habit and practice—all combine to produce a condition of affairs intolerable even at a distance. The missionary is not only a witness of all this, but feels himself helpless. The task is so herculean and the force so inadequate!

8. To all this let it be added, that years may pass before much fruit is seen. It all seems like beating the air, as if life were to no purpose. Judson, in Burma, laboured seven years; others for even fifteen, twenty, thirty years, before the harvest came. Nothing but Divine strength can sustain in such a conflict. Yet they are sustained and have no thought of retreat. Though there may be weary waiting, the issue is not doubtful.

These are some of the difficulties with which foreign missionaries contend and of which they do not often speak. Many other problems arise in the conduct of the work exceedingly delicate and perplexing, requiring the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove. If we have sympathy and encouragement to give, who are more needy or deserving?

Apply 89 Confederation Life Building, Toronto.